



Rockford Area Transportation Study
Metropolitan Planning Organization

POLICY COMMITTEE

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Meeting Minutes – RATS Technical Committee

Meeting Date: February 25, 1999 – Loves Park City Hall

Members Present: Carlos Molina, Winnebago County Highway Dept.; Hong Liu, Rockford Public Works Dept.; David Noel, Winnebago County Planning Dept.; Terry Houghton, Rockford Mass Transit District; Dan Jacobson, City of Loves Park; Wayne Dust, Rockford Community Development Dept.; Bob Martin, Loves Park Transit System.

Others Present: Joe Vanderwerff, Winnebago County Highway Dept.; Bob Soltau IDOT Springfield; Gary McIntyre, RATS staff; Joe Heck, State Line Area Transportation Study; Tom Mathews, Fehr-Graham & Associates; Lew Moon, Cottonwood Airport; Russ Petrotte, RATS staff; Stephen Ernst, Rockford Public Works Department.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES : With a quorum present, Wayne Dust called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM. A motion was made by Joe Vanderwerff to approve the minutes of the October 22, 1998 and January 21, 1999 meetings. The motion was seconded by Hong Liu and approved unanimously.

2. AGENCY REPORTS: Representatives present reported on the status of their ongoing projects. Gary McIntyre reported on the status of IDOT projects at the request of Mary Allen Verdun. This information is incorporated into the attached TIP status report.

3. RATS UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM: Russ Petrotte reviewed the memo of February 5, 1999, addressed to the Policy and Technical Committee and mailed to all persons on the RATS mailing list earlier in the month.

He said the IDOT marks of planning funds have been issued for FY2000 (7/1/99 – 6/30/00) and provide a 12% increase over FY99. He said his analysis of past RATS planning expenditures showed that RATS has been leaving an average of \$48,000 unspent each year over the last several years (these funds are not lost but are reprogrammed in subsequent years). This means there is a total of \$85,000 available for planning work in FY 2000, above and beyond what we normally spend. With the passage of TEA-21, similar funding is likely to be available in the next 4-5 years.

He asked the Committee to provide advice on how we should use these funds. He referred the Committee to Table 2 of his memo. Table 2 lists a wide range of potential planning activities that RATS could undertake.

He said he was seeking input with regard to the following questions. What is the relative priority of the work listed on Table 2? Are there other items that should be listed? Should some of the items be deleted? Should we hire consultants to accomplish the work or should we add staff? If we go the consultant route, should it be on a task-by-task basis as we have done in the past, or put a consultant on retainer? If we add staff, where would they be housed and how would we pay the matching share of their salaries/expenses?

Should a regular amount of RATS funding be devoted to the WinGIS project? And, considering that WinGIS is being proposed as a somewhat autonomous department of County government with “regional” responsibilities, should RATS, be made part of that entity? Should RATS continue to suballocate funding on an “agency” basis or should it be more “task specific” in its allocations? And finally, how will the

regular RATS work blend in with the RAT/SLAT/Northeast Study?

Joe Vanderwerff addressed the question of RATS funding of WinGIS. He said we should be cautious about committing a constant sum to WinGIS, lest the WinGIS effort become unduly reliant on the somewhat tentative RATS funding. Also, in coming years, other planning needs of RATS may develop a higher priority than WinGIS. Mr. Petrotte said that he favored some steady RATS involvement in WinGIS because the data that entity will provide will be very important to RATS regional planning. He also thought it important to aid area governments in absorbing the initially high startup costs of WinGIS. At the same time, he concurred with Mr. Vanderwerff's cautions and suggested that a time limit and/or decreasing involvement level be specified for RATS funding to WinGIS.

David Noel and others expressed the need for continuing refinements to our land use forecasting as input into our traffic forecasting. Land use forecasting is not an exact science and needs to be closely monitored and, regularly updated with new scenarios. This, in turn, needs to be re-fed into our traffic simulation model.

Another area Mr. Noel stressed was the need to keep abreast of intercity rail needs and potentials. Many collar communities of Chicago are considering commuter rail expansions as alternatives to roadway network expansions. This will spread to Boone and Winnebago Counties in the near future.

Wayne Dust discussed the need to reconsider the eastern segment of the Woodruff Avenue Expressway as an isolated or stand-alone project. He reviewed the circuitous routings many motorists must now take as they ingress/egress that urban area via Interstate 39. These routings are causing considerable congestion on South Alpine Road. He noted that the I-39/U.S.20 Interchange was originally designed with the intent of extending a link northward to access the Woodruff. If this link were constructed and the eastern segment of the Woodruff constructed, then traffic could be dispersed more evenly among many routes including Harrison Avenue, Alpine Road and Mulford Road. Mr. Petrotte suggested that the Woodruff also extend to Perryville Road so that this could be another dispersal route.

Mr. Ernst said that most of the preliminary design considerations of the last Woodruff study would remain valid for evaluating this partial Woodruff alternative. He said the traffic situation would need to be remodeled and much of that work could be done in-house by he and Mr. McIntyre.

Mr. Ernst noted that better access to I-39 is needed because of the "wide-load" problem. He explained that many internal urban arterials are now surcharged with "wide load" requests because of the segment of Toll Highway between Wisconsin and U.S.20 and I-39. The Toll Highway does not permit these wide loads and cannot accommodate them due to toll booth widths. Therefore these wide loads must traverse segments of IDOT or local arterials to get to and from the Wisconsin and Illinois (non-toll) Interstate systems. Better access to I-39, via the eastern Woodruff segment would improve this situation. Mr. Petrotte asked why we have never presented this problem to our State legislators with the request that the Toll Highway be redesigned to accommodate wide loads in this critical stretch of roadway, or turned over to IDOT and converted to a non-toll segment.

The question was posed as to whether IDOT would extend additional special funds for the study of some of these special planning needs. Bob Soltau said that might be possible but advised against asking at this time since the State had recently awarded an extra \$280,000 for the RAT/SLAT study. He suggested that RATS get that study underway and begin to produce some results in that work before approaching the State for additional funds.

Mr. Petrotte reiterated his request for specific guidance regarding next year's work program. Some Committee members stated that they needed to talk further with their respective policy-makers before they could be more specific. Mr. Petrotte asked if any of the items he listed in Table 2 should be removed. There was no response. Steve Ernst suggest that the topic be place on next month's agenda and that all Committee members be asked to return with a list of their top five priority planning projects. By consensus the Committee concurred. The usual deadline for the draft UWP is March 15th but Bob Soltau said that the end of March or early April would be acceptable.

4. BOONE COUNTY AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION STUDY:

Mr. Petrotte said that IDOT has developed the proposed IDOT/RATS contracts for this study and they are awaiting approval from the City of Rockford. He said he needs a letter and support materials from Winnebago County assuring that \$70,000 in local match will be provided before he can ask the Rockford City Council to authorize the signing of the contract and the authorization of the Rockford Community Development Department as the lead and front-funding agency. He said he sent a memo to Ron Schultz advising him of this agreement/contract. Joe Vanderwerff asked for a copy of the contract. Mr. Petrotte said he would comply.

Gary McIntyre distributed copies of a work task list for this study that he had recently developed. The format for this list was modeled after a similar list used by WisDOT on similar studies. The listing divided the project into three major phases, 34 tasks, and 19 subtasks. He asked the Committee to review it. A meeting of key participants in this study has been set up for 10:00 AM on March 3rd. At that meeting the above listing will be discussed and assignment of responsibilities will be assigned. Anyone interested is invited.

5.1 FY 2000 TIP TIMETABLE: Gary McIntyre reminded the Committee of the urgency to begin work on the FY 2000 TIP. He distributed a sheet listing the projects proposed by the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority. The list contains three FY99 projects and three FY 2000 projects. There was a brief discussion of the scope of these projects.

5.2 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION URBAN (STU) FUNDS SELECTION PROCESS: The Committee continued discussion initiated in previous meetings regarding the need to identify projects for the future use of STU funds, after the completion of the Springfield/Harrison Project. Mr. McIntyre said the Springfield Project will likely use all STU funds allocated through FY 2002. A project or projects will need to be selected and readied for the FY2003 and subsequent year allocations.

Comments were made regarding the merits of various types of projects and the practice of accumulating several years allocations for a large project. All agreed

7.2 WinGIS: Mr. Petrotte reported that the WinGIS Technical Committee is still awaiting the redraft of the

that accumulating funds over several years was not desirable because of the loss of purchasing power over time, the programming problems created for IDOT, and the possible lost opportunities to capture extra unencumbered funds. The difficulties encountered with projects involving ROW were mentioned. The need for a source of funding for large regional projects, however, remains apparent. Although amassing local funds for such projects is difficult, local funds do have the advantage of being interest bearing during the accumulation stage and less burdened by time-consuming Federal requirements.

Although there is considerable time between now and 2003 when STU funds will become available for a new project, lead time is needed to accomplish the planning and engineering and obtain the approvals prerequisite to actually bid letting, construction and actual fund draw-down. The Committee was urged to begin the process of identifying candidate projects and making a selection as soon as possible.

Steve Ernst and Gary McIntyre noted the unofficial policy of rotating the use of these funds and that it is the City of Rockford's turn. Mr. Petrotte said that the other entities still have a say in the actual project selection and if the project is one that involves multiple jurisdictions and funding sources, Rockford should make this known so that the other jurisdictions can plan accordingly. Also, we need to program the use of the funds for several years.

By consensus the Committee members agreed to consult with their respective agencies and return to the Technical Committee with proposals for candidate projects. The matter will be placed on the Technical Committee agenda for the month of April.

6. RATS MPO – MASS TRANSIT AGREEMENT: Laid over, awaiting comments from the Boone County Board.

7.1 SPRINGFIELD HARRISON PROGRESS: Mr. Vanderwerff said the County is very close to beginning acquisition of properties and still hopes to let construction bids this Fall.

Implementation Plan. A meeting is tentatively set for March 11, 1999 for review of this redraft (8:00AM at

the Rockford Park District). The WinGIS Technical Committee has set up four sub-committees: Orthophotos and Ground Control; Cooperative Agreement; Communications and Networking; and Comprehensive Street Addressing. The first two are currently the most active. Mr. Petrotte said he has been working with the Ortho/Ground Control subcommittee. The most recent consensus of that group is to recommend that roughly half the County (the rural areas) be flown at an elevation that will produce digital files with six inch resolution. The urban or urbanizing parts of the County should be flown low enough to produce three inch resolution. There was debate over the three inch resolution because of the cost but in the end the subcommittee concurred that the higher resolution would be more cost effective in the long run.

Also, although expensive (roughly 50% of the total cost), the subcommittee recommended that a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) be developed. The DTM will allow the accurate generation of street center lines, drainage basins and streams and will greatly facilitate the development of new flood insurance studies throughout the County. The latter studies are nearly 20 years old and out-of-date in many areas. Also, once developed, most of the DTM is salvageable for future reflight efforts. The DTM only needs to be redone where there has been extensive grading and land disturbance.

Finally, the subcommittee is convinced that an accurate and permanent network of ground control points needs to be established. They propose a 2-mile grid of permanently monumented points as part of the control network. This will greatly improve the accuracy of future surveying in the County, will aid in resolving property disputes and will facilitate the efficient incorporation of new subdivision plats into the GIS system.

The total cost of the proposed orthophoto / ground control work is estimated, on the high side, at \$1.9 million.

7.3 NORTHWEST CONNECTION/BYPASS PROGRESS: David Noel said he would be arranging a meeting of the subcommittee in the near future. One of the purposes will be to discuss issues related to the Winnebago Corners area.

7.4 ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM PROGRESS: Mr. Vanderwerff reported that the County has taken a lead role in filing grant requests for TEA-21 Enhancement funds in the Rockford area. The first application is due on March 1, 1999 and the County will send four project requests to IDOT:

1. Davis - Pecatonica Path: A proposal to connect the Pecatonica Prairie Path at its current terminus near the City Yards with Davis Park in downtown Rockford.
2. Kishwaukee Trail: From Blackhawk Spring Forest Preserve to Baumann Park in Cherry Valley
3. Kin Stone Trail Extension: To connect a path in the Valley of Roscoe with the Stone Bridge Natural Trail. (List project is in the SLATS MPO area.)
4. Perryville Path: From the intersection of Perryville Road and Argus, to Bell School Road, to Cherry Valley to connect with the Swanson Path in Cherry Valley.

In addition to the above, the Rockford Park District will be requesting additional funds for use on the suspension bridge at Tinker Cottage.

Also, the Winnebago County Highway Department will be making a request for funding to establish a stretch of natural and scenic planting along Perryville Road between IL-173 and Harlem Road.

8. COMMUNICATIONS: None.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. McIntyre said a letter has been mailed out to the area's elected officials regarding the formation of the RATS Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Also, the RATS Truck Routes Subcommittee had a meeting on Tuesday (February 23th) regarding the mapping of the area's truck routes and over-size and over-weight vehicle routes. Mr. McIntyre said the Subcommittee is working on this issue and will be meeting within the next two months to finalize the truck routes before proceeding to identify the Hazardous Cargo Routes in the area.

10. ADJOURNMENT: At 12:20 PM the meeting was adjourned.